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ABSTRACT

PROJECT MERGE is a teacher education concept from which educational processes based on changing educational developments evolve. MERGE is a systematic, field-based, cooperative approach to teacher education, instruction, and curriculum development. It has been validated and is competency based. It represents an interrelational tri-phase structure composed of the following: (a) an inservice program which affects the renewal and enhancement of the contract teacher's competencies consistent with the demands for flexibility of functioning in a constantly changing educational age; (b) a preservice element dedicated to producing a beginning baccalaureate teacher capable of functioning across traditional categorical lines and of adjusting to evolving change; and (c) a graduate aspect relating to the production of a cadre of young persons who can assume a leadership role in the upgrading of teacher education programs. The project represents a merging of the physical, personnel, and fiscal resources of the Toledo Public Schools and Bowling Green State University to improve the quality of education. (The document includes the project budget and staff specifications of the project.) (Author/JA)

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Bowling Green University
Bowling Green, Ohio

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AACTE
Distinguished Achievement Awards
PROJECT MERGE
1975

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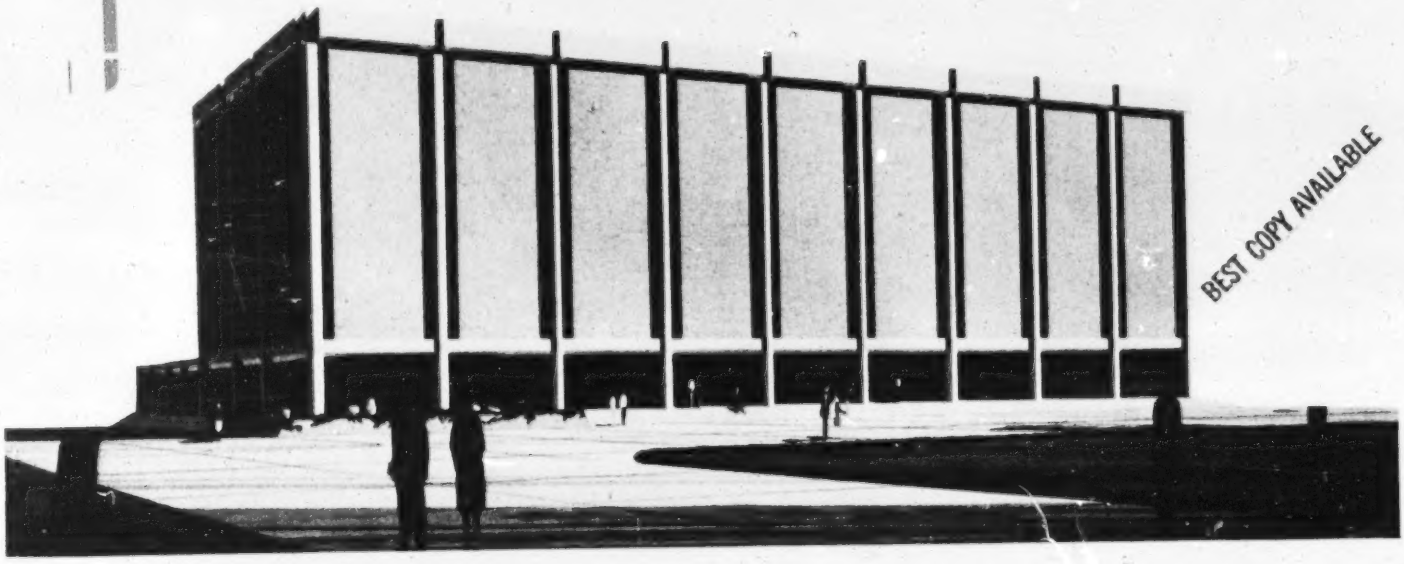

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College of Education

SP008 560

Summary Statement

PROJECT MERGE

A cooperative field based inservice and preservice teacher education program cooperatively and equally conducted by Bowling Green State University and the Toledo, Ohio, Board of Education.

PROJECT MERGE is a teacher education concept from which evolve educational processes based upon changing educational developments. MERGE is a systematic field based, cooperative approach to teacher education, instruction, and curriculum development. Such a program is mutually beneficial to the University and the participating schools.

This project has been field validated and is competency based. It represents an interrelational tri-phase structure composed of:

(1) An inservice program which affects the renewal and enhancement of the contract teacher's competencies consistent with the demands for flexibility of functioning in a constantly changing educa tional age;

(2) A preservice element dedicated to producing a beginning baccalaureate teacher capable of functioning across traditional categorical lines and of adjusting to evolving change;

(3) A graduate aspect relating to the production of a cadre of young personnel who can assume a leadership role in the upgrading of teacher education programs, and, thereby, the entire teaching profession.

The focus of PROJECT MERGE involves changing curriculum to such a structure that learning becomes more direct, efficient, and relevant. The major component is a strong field based corps of students in an educational setting. This is a learner-centered project. The Toledo Public Schools and Bowling Green State University have merged physical, personnel, and fiscal resources to concurrently improve the quality of education of the undergraduate and graduate University student, the contract teacher, and the recipient public school student.

PROJECT MERGE
Bowling Green State University

Description and Development

Bowling Green State University and the Toledo Board of Education have been cooperating for three years in preparing teachers of children with moderate to severe degrees of exceptionality both in the regular and special classroom.

Initially a two quarter field based program which included methods courses and student teaching in the area of mental retardation and elementary education was instituted in designated Toledo public schools. Students completing this program, when compared with control groups on-campus, were more competent in measurable instructional strategies. However, the on-campus group scored higher on tests of educational theory. Informal analysis indicated that those students involved in the field based programs were more confident about entering the teaching field.

Based on this pilot, MERGE was planned to incorporate benefits of traditional on-campus instruction with specialized field based competencies in four certification areas: educable mentally retarded, learning disabilities, behavioral disorders and elementary education. Specialized areas such as trainable mentally retarded, orthopedically handicapped, art, music, and industrial education are being incorporated on an individual basis in addition to general competencies needed by teachers in a changing educational setting.

Objectives

MERGE is an organized pattern of three consecutive quarters to integrate knowledge with competencies in multi-areas in order to meet the needs of many different learning problems of children in both regular and special classrooms.

The College of Education, Department of Special Education at Bowling Green State University, together with Maumee, Toledo, and Wood County Public School systems, after evaluating (both formally and informally) the results of the pilot studies, and regular contract teacher questionnaires, determined that teaching competencies could best be achieved by the following strategies:

1. University faculty (in teams of three or more with various expertise) available to provide classroom instruction in contact with children;
2. Maximize classroom contact to at least one full year among student teachers, master teachers, university supervisors, and pupils;
3. Full utilization of physical facilities and materials of both the University and public school agencies;

4. Combination of inservice and preservice techniques and components;

5. Sharing of fiscal responsibilities and resources by both agencies;

6. Total services provided for all children in areas of educable mentally retarded, learning disabilities, and emotionally disturbed in regular or special classes including supervision, inservice training, preservice training, and general research by the co-project director, university supervisors, master teachers and assigned personnel;

7. University supervisors in conjunction with the master teachers providing instruction for University students participating in MERGE methods courses and supervision of their classroom teaching (concurrent practicum);

8. Methods courses for MERGE-University students may be taught in each of the four settings, central city school, industrial area school, rural school or suburban school; regular and special classroom teachers from these instructional settings are encouraged to attend these sessions as part of their inservice programming; professional growth credits are available for contract teachers attending these sessions;

9. Participating teachers are trained to serve a dual role of teaching all children (mildly handicapped as well as average) as well as training future teachers in methods modules and on-the-job classroom teaching techinques, this procedures relates to the overall goal of decentralized competency based teacher education; much of this training for the contract teacher was achieved during summer institutes and during the regular academic year on a regular scheduled basis;

10. Research has been implemented to determine to what extent inter-relationships exists in educational objectives among educable mentally retarded, trainable mentally retarded, learning disabilities, behavioral disorders (emotionally disturbed), orthopedically handicapped and the traditional elementary curriculum.

11. The establishment of an advisory committee consisting of parents, administrators, contract teachers, Union (School) representatives, University staff and college students to work closely with MERGE Co-directors and staff.

Personnel

In order for most children, even those with learning problems, to be better educated in the main flow of education it becomes necessary that inservice education be provided to the present contract teacher. Staff cutbacks are likely to be taking place in the years ahead. As staff reductions are made and fewer new competency based teachers, i.e. Project MERGE students are hired, school staffing

patterns will include a higher and higher proportion of teachers whose preservice education was of a traditional method.

In practicum settings the University student can translate theory and methods learnings into effective practice with learning problem children in a regular classroom under continuous monitoring of training staff whose teaching pattern exemplifies the skills to be acquired. The contract teacher and the University Supervisors are in continuous communication and are thus able to improve practices within the public school; this yields more demonstration opportunity and more ideal classroom sites. The classroom laboratory is the real world for both future and present teachers.

Initially a five-week summer institute was funded by the Ohio State Department of Public Instruction, Division of Special Education. Participants in this institute as well as those conducted during the regular academic year were public school contract teachers, principals, University staff and graduate students who would be involved in the MERGE project. Nationally recognized consultants were employed to instruct participants in systematic approaches to curriculum development and implementation of preservice and inservice competency based programs.

Operation

During the Fall 1973 MERGE was instituted under the direction of Dr. Darrel G. Minifie with seventy-five (75) undergraduate and ten (10) graduate students. Six University staff members who had been involved in the summer institute provided the instruction and supervision during this year.

Instruction was held on campus for the first five weeks. Included in this series of programs were the same types of instruction which had been provided for the summer institute personnel. In addition instruction included state certification and proficiency requirements for utilization of audio-visual materials and equipment, competencies in writing and evaluating behavioral objectives, along with beginning core curriculum instruction in educable mental retardation, learning disabilities and behavioral disorders. All students entering MERGE had completed their elementary education certification requirements. In most cases this instruction had been completed in the public school setting with practicum experience accompanying curriculum instruction.

Upon completion of the on-campus instruction, students were assigned in teams of 30 students and three University supervisors each having a speciality in Learning Disabilities, Mental Retardation or general elementary education.

From here the students were placed in public school classrooms with contract teachers who had completed one of the institutes previously held for classroom observation, assessment, and instructional strategies.

During the times when students are assigned to public school classrooms, University staff members are free to supervise students assigned to their team. University students meet individually with their contract teacher either before or after school.

All students continue with core curriculum instruction on a team basis, in all learning areas on a regularly scheduled basis. The amount of curriculum instruction will decrease and classroom practicum will increase to five days per week as students demonstrate knowledge and competencies in curriculum theory and instruction.

Budget Projection

Estimated Budget
MERGE Project 1974-1975

Department of Special Education		
Staff	$54,861.00	
2 New Staff (Est)	15,000.00	
Secretary 2/3 Time	4,200.00	
		$74,061.00
Student Teaching Program and Dean's Office		
Staff	$69,879.00	
*Contract Teachers	18,726.00	
Staff Travel	3,000.00	
		91,605.00
Project Fees		
**Miscellaneous Expenses		11,760.00
Toledo Board of Education		4,000.00
		$181,426.00

*3,121 hours of Student Teaching Credit
$6.00 per hour to Contract Teacher

**392 Student equivalents in Project MERGE
$30.00 per students

Summary

Department of Special Education
1 Full Time Staff
7 Part Time Staff

Student Teaching Program and Dean's Office
4 Full Time Staff
3 Part Time Staff

**Funds used for consultants, student and faculty travel, books, instructional materials, and equipment.

Not included in the above budget is the University fringe benefits for faculty and staff.

Evaluation and Contribution to Teacher Education

The Office of Research and Services, College of Education, designed and applied an evaluation for MERGE at the end of the 1973-74 school year. The results of this showed positive attitudes from contract teachers, university personnel and students. The complete instrument and findings are exhibited in supporting information.

Evaluation of competencies is an ongoing activity as perceived in the MERGE PROJECT model. It is one that will not terminate until the student graduates. As a student becomes competent at one level, he is assigned to another level.

There are other possible alternatives to the further development of the concepts being developed in PROJECT MERGE. The MERGE staff views this as only a beginning. This model has developed to the point where students graduating from this Project are in demand. All students graduating after the first year of MERGE are employed in teaching stations with the majority of those graduating this December already employed and many others have been interviewed for later employment dates.